Greetings,

A letter from Ralph Martin

I’d like to continue the exposition of charisms in the Church that I began last month. Due to the shortness of space, catching up on “the news” will have to wait until next month.

**What are charisms?**

Charisms are not just “natural abilities” but gifts distributed by the Spirit to each person as He wills. Charisms often build on and work with our natural personalities and abilities, but not always.

This is clearly the case in the more obvious “supernatural” gifts such as healing or miracles. When someone who has been given the charism of healing prays with people who are sick many more get well than when people without that particular gift pray for the sick. We all should pray for the sick but some who pray for the sick have a special gift of healing working through them. The action of the Holy Spirit is also present in the less obviously supernatural charisms.

We are grateful for all our preachers and teachers but some seem to have a special “gift” that is not only the fruit of human eloquence or diligent study but brings with it a sense of God’s presence and has a particular ability to help us recognize that the Lord is present and speaking to us in the preaching or teaching. Sometimes we call this exercise of the Word “anointed.” The charism of “prophecy” in the broad sense or the charism of teaching is then at work. Prophecy in this sense isn’t about particular predictions, although this may happen occasionally as well. It’s rather about Spirit-inspired speaking of God’s Word that causes the heart of the hearers to “burn” similar to what the disciples on the road to Emmaus experienced when Jesus explained the Scriptures to them.

The same is true with the gift of encouragement or exhortation. We are grateful for “positive personalities” that lift up relationships but there are certain people who

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Sr. Ann Shields spoke at the 16th annual Lift Jesus Higher Rally in Toronto this spring and exhorted the large crowd “to be a light in the darkness of the increasingly despotic, man-centered culture.”
Greetings,

seem to have a particular gift for speaking the right word at the right time, words of encouragement, that lift us up in a special way, so that we may experience the impartation of grace, peace, or hope that we need.

The same is true with the gift of “generous giving.” We are grateful for all those who give generously to support the work of the Church and its ministries—and we all should be doing this—but there are certain among us who God has gifted to be able to make money and in being able to discern what, when and to whom to give it, in a way that is truly remarkable. Some have a “gift/charism” of giving generously, the right amount at the right time to the right recipient.

It also seems clear from the scripture that each member of the body is given some charism or charisms and that each member of the body has a call or vocation, to use the gifts they are given to build up the body and help carry out the Church’s mission. It also seems clear that none of the scriptural lists of charisms we have cited intend to be comprehensive in listing the possible charisms. They are rather indicative of the rich diversity of gifts that the Holy Spirit gives, not all of which are listed or perhaps ever could be.

There has been a lot of attention given to the call for the laity to “fully, actively and consciously” participate in the Liturgy, but attention also needs to be given to the need for lay people to recognized the gift(s) that they are being given by the Spirit that they have a responsibility to exercise, in love, for the good of the Church.

Witness of the Tradition

The teaching of the contemporary magisterium is not only supported by the clear biblical teaching but illumined by the early tradition of the Church. A great deal of helpful scholarship has been done which illumines the experience of the Spirit and the charisms in the first centuries of the Church.¹

Tertullian, in his On Baptism, written in the early third century, addresses the newly baptized who are about to enter the area where all will celebrate the Eucharist: “Therefore, you blessed ones, for whom the grace of God is waiting, when you come up from the most sacred bath of the new birth, when you spread out your hands for the first time in your mother’s house (the church) with your brethren, ask your Father, ask your Lord, for the special gift of his inheritance, the distribution of charisms, which form an additional, underlying feature (of baptism). ‘Ask,’ he says ‘and you shall receive.’ In fact, you have sought and it has been added to you.”

Hilary of Poitiers (c. 315–367) writes of the experience of the charisms: “We begin to have insight into the mysteries of faith, we are able to prophesy and to speak with wisdom. We become steadfast in hope and receive the gifts of healing…These gifts enter us as a gentle rain. Little by little they bear abundant fruit.”

Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 315–387) also speaks of the charisms in his baptismal lectures: “Great, omnipotent and admirable is the Holy Spirit in the charisms.” He notes that “all the laity” have charisms.

Following St. Paul’s exhortation to especially seek to prophesy, Cyril declares: “Let each one prepare oneself to receive the heavenly gift (of prophecy),” and “God grant that you may be worthy of the charism of prophecy.”

John Chrysostom (c. 347–407), commenting on the Syrian liturgy in Antioch notes that the charisms were manifested in connection with the baptismal liturgy and mentions specifically, wisdom, healing, speaking in tongues, prophesy, and other “wonderful works.” He notes even that “every church had many who prophesied.”

¹ Why, by the fifth century, in at least major portions of the Church, did the church only retain ‘tokens’ of her previous charismatic prosperity?
Montague and McDonnell sum up their research with a striking summary. “Thus, from Carthage in North Africa, Poitiers in Gaul, Jerusalem in Palestine, from Caesarea in Cappadocia, from Constantinople, and from Antioch, Apamea, Mabbug, and Cyrrhus in Syria, we have witnesses to the reception of the charisms within the rite of initiation. These are representatives of Latin, Greek, and Syria liturgical traditions. From Antioch, Apamea, Mabbug, and Cyrrhus in Syria we have testimony to a later experiential appropriation of the graces of baptism conferred in infancy.”

Chrysostom though, writing in the 5th century, makes the sobering observation that “the charisms are long gone...The present church is like a woman who has fallen from her former prosperous days. In many respects she retains only the tokens of that ancient prosperity.”

Why, by the fifth century, in at least major portions of the Church, did the church only retain “tokens” of her previous charismatic prosperity? Was it because persecution had ceased and it was expected that everyone be a Christian? Were the standards for admitting new Christians lowered? Was the preparation no longer carefully carried out? Did the Montanist heretics give the charisms a bad name?

The Montanist heresy illustrates the wisdom of the scripture and Church’s teaching about the importance of charisms being subject to the discernment of pastoral authority, not to extinguish the Spirit but to test it, holding on to what is sound. (1 Thes 5:19–21)

“It is in this sense that the discernment of charisms is always necessary. No charism is exempt from being referred and submitted to the Church’s shepherds...so that all the diverse and complementary charisms work together ‘for the common good.’” (CCC 801)

Whatever the reasons that led to the decline as the life of the Church went on the charisms became mainly associated with the lives of especially holy people, saints, and the charisms are regularly seen in the lives of saints throughout the centuries.

As John Paul II, and now Benedict XVI, continues to lead the proper interpretation and implementation of Vatican II, they both have stressed the importance of rediscovering the universal call to holiness and the universal call to evangelization. The “rediscovery” of the charismatic dimension of the Church unfolds in this context.

John Paul II especially never tired of saying that holiness is for everyone, and that evangelization is for everyone. It isn’t just for special people—saints or missionaries—but that all of us are called to be saints and missionaries.

This is the rediscovery of a biblical and traditional truth that truly has potential to bring an extraordinary “new springtime” to a Church that desperately needs one.

John Paul II makes clear that it is very important that this remarkable “rediscovery” of the charismatic dimension of the Church’s constitution be responded to with attention and gratitude.

He continues to cry out from the Father’s house: “Today, I would like to cry out to all of you gathered here in St. Peter’s Square and to all Christians: Open yourselves docilely to the gifts of the Spirit! Accept gratefully and obediently the charisms which the Spirit never ceases to bestow on us!”

May it be so!

Ralph Martin

(Endnotes)


2 Fanning the Flame, pp. 20–21.

3 All citations are taken from and the original references contained in pp. 16–18 of Fanning the Flame.

4 “The universal call to holiness is closely linked to the universal call to mission. Every member of the faithful is called to holiness and to mission.” John Paul II, Redemptoris Missio, 1990. VIII, 90.

5 (L’Observatore Romano, English Language Edition, June 3, 1998; This is the day the Lord has made! Holy Father holds historic meeting with ecclesial movements and new communities; pp. 1–2.)
Mission to Lithuania

Marsha and I first visited Lithuania on mission in 1993. In the intervening years I have visited fifteen to twenty times. Although the country is increasingly secularized because of its integration into the European Economic Community, by the grace of the Spirit the deep Christian faith that endured Soviet persecution for fifty years is springing to life in the hearts of many. The central city (and archdiocese) of Kaunas where Renewal Ministries has been most involved shows quite a bit of spiritual vitality. In four days I spoke at two different healing Masses each attended by several hundred people and a Day of Renewal for almost 1000.

It is extraordinary the way the charismatic renewal is leavening the Catholic Church of Lithuania. Here are a few examples of how the Lord is using many of the people we have known and worked with to fulfill key roles. The main Catholic seminaries in the country require their seminarians to undergo a year of formation prior to beginning their seven years of seminary study. The academic program consists of reading and discussing the entire bible and Catechism over eight months. In addition, the seminarians devote three or four weekends to a Life in the Spirit Seminar (given by the Living Stones Community), another weekend to a St. Philip’s Course, a program that leads people into baptism in the Spirit and evangelization (given by the Catholic Evangelization Center), and other weekends to learning from some good Jesuits about discernment and ministry to the poor. In total, there are ten weekends of exposure to lay evangelization and formation programs.

A young man we met in 1993 named Arturas Lukasevicius is now professor of Catechesis at Vytautas Magnus University. In the intervening years he went to Franciscan University, where he recognized a calling to catechesis under the influence of Professor Barbara Morgan, and then completed a doctorate in theology by distance-learning at Maryvale University in England. Archbishop Tamkevicius then invited him to take charge of the Kaunas Archdiocesan Catechetical Center—responsible for forming and licensing 230 Catholic religion teachers in public schools and for overseeing programs of preparation for sacraments in all the parishes of the Archdiocese. Under Arturas’ leadership, the Catechetical Center has established an eight month program for 14 year olds preparing to receive the sacrament of confirmation. With the explicit approval of the auxiliary bishop who oversees this office, the first three months of this confirmation program consists of evangelization in the form of Alpha for Youth. All parish catechists who prepare these young people must go through Alpha themselves so they can teach the children. Obviously, the potential impact of this program is great.

Another friend of ours, Benas Ulevicius, who interned at the Word of God and Renewal Ministries nine years ago (along with Dale, whom he married), is now the Dean of Theology at Vytautas University in Kaunas.
even though he only recently received his doctorate. This promotion resulted from the removal of the previous dean, but to everyone’s amazement (including his own) Benas has taken on this administrative role with great gusto and success.

Benas is able to promote many initiatives that strengthen the life of the Church, including a new office in the theology faculty that will deploy theology students in evangelization in high schools as part of their formation. Benas arranged several lectures for me at the University on biblical interpretation and on the theology of baptism in the Spirit. Benas continues his leadership of the Christian rock group Quest Rising (google it to see Benas NOT looking like a university dean).

Benas’ wife Dale works at the Archdiocese of Kaunas’ Catholic Evangelization Center where she is organizing the Pentecost for the Nations festival for all of Lithuania. Other close friends continue very successful ministries at the Center training Alpha Leaders, running a program of inner healing, organizing conferences, and other evangelization programs. Saulius, another friend who accompanied me on mission to Kazakhstan works at the Archdiocesan Family Center and in his spare time he has helped with a men’s conference. He’s married to Zivile who also works at the Evangelization Center, and they have two beautiful children. We first knew Zivile as part of a fervent guitar-playing young teenage gang of evangelizers at a camp we led in the summer of 1994. Although most of those friends have wandered away from the Lord, she remains as fervent as ever.

Agne, a young woman who also accompanied me in Kazakhstan has joined a Benedictine convent, where she and Sr. Celina are helping to renew a religious community that was suppressed under communist times. Sr. Celina is the novice master; there are nine young sisters, all baptized in the Spirit and they are living together with another twenty-five older sisters (one is 92, an American Lithuanian who returned). Many of the older sisters were underground nuns during Soviet times who have never lived in community and their successful life together is something of a miracle.

Meanwhile, the Living Stones continues to do good work organizing Days of Renewal and Life in the Spirit Seminars. Their service in the area of worship music is quite wonderful and always moves me deeply. Dale Smorauskaite, the founder of the group during Soviet times, is no longer a member, but continues to work for the Archdiocese overseeing its website and various publications. She remains a fervent, wise and steadfast sister in the Lord.

I don’t want to paint too rosy a picture. Some of those we have worked with have fallen away from the Lord and messed up their lives and families. Ordinary Lithuanian people have very little Christian formation. To pray with many of them for inner healing as I have done during these days means to hear tragic stories of family dysfunction, physical and emotional suffering, alcoholism, and often violence.

Nevertheless, after the long winter of communism, a new springtime of Christianity has unquestionably begun and new life is springing up everywhere.

“...We first knew Zivile as part of a fervent guitar-playing young teenage gang of evangelizers at a camp we led in the summer of 1994...”

Please Pray...

+ for protection and wisdom during the upcoming mission to China and Hong Kong.
+ that the School of Catholic Bible Study this month would be a time of deeper conversion and equipping as we study and encounter the living Word of God.
+ for the prayer intentions of all our supporters and their family members.

Thank you for your continued support through prayer as we labor together for the Gospel and the renewal of the Church.
The 16th Annual Lift Jesus Higher Rally Draws Thousands

Since its beginning in 1992, the annual Lift Jesus Higher Rally in Toronto has drawn thousands of people—young and old—to a day dedicated to proclaiming Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul Kromer, the conference organizer for Catholic Renewal Ministries of Canada views the event as a key evangelistic event. At the end of each year’s rally he challenges each person to invite someone new the following year, especially those who have drifted away from the Church.

This year’s Rally was located again at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre where more than 4,000 adults and over 900 youth gathered in separate sessions for uplifting music and worship, inspirational talks, Eucharistic Adoration, prayer ministry and the celebration of the Mass.

Fr. Frank Pavone, National Director of Priests for Life and a prominent pro-life leader spoke with passion and conviction on the issues surrounding abortion. He proclaimed, “As followers of Christ, it is our duty to stand up for life in the face of the culture of death.” Peter Herbeck gave the challenge to “surrender radically to God no matter what,” and Sr. Ann Shields reminded all in attendance, “to be a light in the darkness of the increasingly despotic man-centered culture.”

The sessions for the youth, ages 12–20, included talks, testimonies, skits, and worship music to help them respond to God’s call in their own lives and face the challenges of the increasingly secular culture. In speaking to the youth, Fr. Pavone encouraged them to fearlessly fight for the unborn as they realize, “It could have been me.” Here’s what some of the youth had to say about the day:

- “The Youth Rally was awesome again this year! Although I have heard many pro-life talks, I found Fr. Frank a very passionate and engaging speaker.”
- “The day was awesome, uplifting, very motivational…Our faith was strengthened and renewed, and we had fun at the same time!”
- “I was thrilled to witness other young people on fire for God!”

Next year’s Lift Jesus Higher Rally on April 18, 2009 will feature keynote speaker Tim Staples. It promises to be a fresh and dynamic experience of the Holy Spirit as Jesus is made present through the power of inspired preaching. As one faithful attendee said, “Every year I look forward to the next Lift Jesus Higher Rally in Toronto. This is a ‘must attend’ on my calendar!”

Our awesome team of teens and young adults from Michigan brought a message of hope, life, and joy to the Canadian youth through testimonies, skits, and worship.

Charlotte Frutig plays the wise princess and Trevor Rolph the farmer, in a humorous skit with a message about chastity and learning to treasure the gifts of God.
This past April, I had the opportunity to accompany Peter Herbeck to the city of Sec near Prague, in the Czech Republic. Peter spoke at the 2008 European RELaY Conference which hosted groups from all over Europe that are involved in various ways with the renewal and evangelization of Europe. RELaY is a European network which promotes reconciliation among Christians, the re-evangelization of Europe, the formation of lay leaders, and the mobilization of youth for the Gospel. The theme of this year’s conference was “Living as a People of Hope”. Over 400 people gathered, many of them young, from across Europe to pray and worship together, to form new friendships, and to listen to presentations given by Peter and Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa, a Franciscan Capuchin Catholic priest appointed by Pope John Paul II to be preacher to the Papal Household.

As a fellow participant I can attest to the power of this gathering. I witnessed firsthand how alive our Church really is and I joined many others from throughout Europe in praise and thanksgiving to God. Because of the diversity of people in attendance, all of the talks had to be simultaneously translated into several different languages. That aspect alone strongly conveyed how united we truly are as members of Christ’s body. During this four day event we heard talks about the link between true hope and our personal recognition of the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Even though we were people from many different countries, languages, and ministries, we were gathered there as a people united under one Hope, one Lord, and one mission to offer our lives in service to God.

As the event came to a close I was curious about what other participants had to say about the conference. Dominik Heen a 27 year old from Rarendsburg, South Germany said, “It’s nice to see Eastern Europe burning for God and how the people express their faith in song and dance…I became even more aware of the greatness of God; He must be overwhelming—No… He IS overwhelming!” Jakub Novak from Podolinec, Slovakia said, “I think the cooperation with the different communities, backgrounds, and nations and keeping Jesus as the most important thing brings a new dimension to the Church in Europe. It’s a confirmation of what started 10 years ago.” Paul Jordan, age 33 from Belgium who works in full-time ministry with youth and university outreach, said the humility of Fr. Cantalamessa was the most impactful for him. “I am convicted,” he said, “that servanthood is the key for different cultures to come together and work together.”

Over 400 people from across Europe, many of them young, gathered in Prague to hear presentations by Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa, a Franciscan Capuchin Catholic priest appointed by Pope John Paul II as preacher to the Papal Household.

At the RELaY Conference in Prague, Peter Herbeck shares a reflection on Pope Benedict’s encyclical Spe Salvi—Saved in Hope.
On the Road

For me prayer is a surge of the heart, it is a simple look towards Heaven, it is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy.

Saint Thérèse of Lisieux

July 2008

Hong Kong and China Mission
July 2–15
Tom Edwards, Sr. Ann Shields, Sr. Sarah Burdick

Yankton, SD
Yahweh Shalom Prayer Group Retreat
July 18–19
Ralph Martin
Contact Jane Barz at cottonwoodfrm@santel.net

Plymouth, MI, Renewal Ministries School of Catholic Bible Study
July 24–27
Debbie Herbeck, Laurie Manhardt, Fr. Jan Liesen, Fr. Joseph Ponessa

Peoria, IL
Catholic Charismatic Renewal Conference
July 25–27
Peter Herbeck
Contact: lakehaus1@verizon.net or www.CalltoBeHoly.org

August 2008

Moncton, New Brunswick
Atlantic Renewal Conference
August 1–3
Ralph Martin
Contact: 902-667-7179 or asc@ccrsatlantic.ca

Mexico City Mission
August 3–9
Jim Murphy and Team
Contact Jessica at 734-662-1730 or jsherwood@renewalministries.net

Tignish, Prince Edward Island, Canada, St. Simon and St. Jude Parish Evening of Renewal
August 5
Ralph Martin
Contact number: 902-854-2667

Summerside, Prince Edward Island, St. Paul Parish Evening of Renewal
August 6
Ralph Martin
Contact number: 902-854-2667

Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island,
St. Dunstan’s Basilica Evening of Renewal
August 8
Ralph Martin
Contact number: 902-854-2667

Oceanside, CA, Catholic Men’s Fellowship
August 8–9
Peter Herbeck
Contact Jeff Blake at 949-212-0770 or geblake@cox.net

Royal Oak, MI
Young Adult Conference on Scripture
August 16
Debbie Herbeck
Contact: mccormickt@macomb.edu

Louisiana
Renewal Ministries School of Evangelization
August 21–24
Peter Herbeck, Lloyd and Nancy Greenhaw
Contact Deacon Doug at doug@houma.com

“Renewal Ministries is a Catholic ministry committed to renewal and evangelization in the Church. It seeks to proclaim Jesus Christ through its TV and radio outreaches, as well as through books, tapes, conferences, retreats and other international evangelistic events.”

Editor   Design
Debra Herbeck  Anne Martin

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